Code of Welfare

Painful Husbandry Procedures

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1 October 2018

Issued under the Animal Welfare Act 1999

New Zealand Government

TITLE

Code of Welfare: Painful Husbandry Procedures

COMMENCEMENT

This Code of Welfare comes into force on 1 October 2018.

REVOCATION

This Code of Welfare revokes and replaces the Animal Welfare (Painful Husbandry Procedures) Code of Welfare 2005, dated 23 December 2005.

ISSUING AUTHORITY

This Code of Welfare is issued by the Minister of Agriculture, by a notice published in the Gazette, under section 75 and 76 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999, after having complied with the matters specified in section 75(1) and 76(2).

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Contents

Introduction

This introduction is not part of the Code of Welfare, but is intended to indicate its general effect.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code is to provide information to all persons responsible for the welfare of farmed animals subjected to any procedure carried out with or without instruments which involves physical interference with the sensitive soft tissue or bone structure of an animal and is carried out for non-therapeutic reasons.

This Code encourages all those responsible for carrying out painful husbandry procedures to adopt the highest standards of husbandry, care and handling, and to equal or exceed the minimum standards.

This Code does not apply to procedures used to treat animals with existing injuries or diseases.

Background

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 provides for the welfare of animals in New Zealand. It puts obligations on people who own or are in charge of animals to provide for the welfare of their animals.

The Act establishes the fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals and provides for the development and issue of codes of welfare.

Codes of welfare expand on the basic obligations of the Act by setting minimum standards and recommending best practice for the care and management of animals.

While this Code covers all painful husbandry procedures, specific information is provided for castration, tail docking, and disbudding and dehorning only. For specific information on other procedures, please refer to species specific codes. This Code does not apply to "significant surgical procedures", including "controlled" or "restricted surgical procedures", as defined in the Act.

This Code of Welfare also references regulations issued under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. Regulations are prescribed under the Animal Welfare Act and impose enforceable requirements on owners and persons in charge of animals. For ease of reference, regulations relevant to this Code are set out in an appendix to this Code. Penalties for failure to comply with the regulations are specified in the relevant regulations. The appendix to this Code is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of all obligations under the Act or regulatory requirements. Owners and persons in charge of animals are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of and understand all Act and regulatory requirements that are relevant to them.

Where regulations have been issued but are not yet in force, due to a delayed commencement date, they are referenced in italics and the commencement date is noted.

Who should read this Code of Welfare?

This Code of Welfare is intended for all owners and persons in charge of animals requiring painful husbandry procedures and for those persons responsible for carrying out painful husbandry procedures.

Under the Act, the "owner" of an animal and the "person in charge" is responsible for meeting the legal obligations for animal welfare. In the case of farm animals, the owner of the animals may place the animals in the care of others.

Responsibility for meeting minimum standards relating to the provision, design and maintenance of the facilities and equipment, the allocation of operational responsibilities and the competence and supervision of employee performance will lie with the owner or person in charge of the animals.

Responsibility for meeting minimum standards during the operation of particular tasks will lie with the person responsible for carrying out that particular task. That person is "in charge" of the animals at that particular point in time. Generally, a stockhandler is the person in charge of the animals in that stockhandler's care. In practice, the identification of the person in charge will depend on the minimum standard in question.

Why is this important?

Failure to meet a minimum standard in this code may be used as evidence to support a prosecution for an offence under the Act. A person who is charged with an offence against the Act can defend him or herself by showing that he or she has equalled or exceeded the minimum standards in this Code.

Owners and persons in charge of animals are not required to comply with the recommendations for best practice in this Code, but are encouraged to do so to provide higher standards of welfare.

Legislative background

This Code does not provide an exhaustive list of the Act's requirements, and owners and those in charge of animals should note that they must comply with the minimum standards in this Code and in the general provisions of the Act. A copy of the Act is accessible at: www.legislation.govt.nz.

Other information

Other codes of welfare should be consulted where appropriate (see www.mpi.govt.nz). Other codes that are relevant include species specific codes concerned with the farming of pigs, sheep, dairy and beef cattle, deer and poultry.

Codes of welfare must be accompanied by a report that sets out the deliberations that the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) undertook when developing the codes of welfare including the standards and recommendations for best practice, the nature of any significant differences of opinion during drafting and consultation, and any matters that should be dealt with by regulation. Code reports can be accessed online (see www.mpi.govt.nz).

Although efforts to include relevant regulations within this Code have been made, there may be other regulations which are relevant to you. The full list of all animal welfare regulations should be consulted where appropriate (see www.legislation.govt.nz).

Part 1: General Requirements

1.1 Application

This Code applies to all persons responsible for the welfare of farmed animals subjected to any painful husbandry procedure (see Schedule I – Interpretation and Definitions).

This Code does not apply to “significant surgical procedures”, including “controlled” or “restricted surgical procedures”, as defined in the Act.

1.2 Interpretation and Definitions

Refer to Schedule I – Interpretation and Definitions.

Part 2: General Principles

Introduction

Farm animals may be subject to husbandry procedures undertaken for a variety of reasons. These include to:

- minimise the risk of injury to animals and humans, particularly where animals are kept at higher stocking rates or handled frequently (e.g. dehorning),
- enable animals to be more easily managed (e.g. dehorning, castration),
- prevent carcass damage such as skin cuts or bruising (e.g. dehorning),
- enhance carcass quality or composition (e.g. castration),
- minimise conditions leading to increased risk of flystrike (e.g. tail docking),
- aid in identification (e.g. ear marking or notching), or to harvest products (e.g. velvet antler removal).

The reasons for undertaking these procedures may differ between species and between farming systems. For example, bulls may be castrated to make them easier and safer to handle whereas sheep may be castrated to control meat quality or prevent breeding.

Most of these procedures can cause significant anxiety, fear, discomfort, pain or distress. The major causes of these responses may include:

- mustering, handling and restraint,
- acute or short-term pain resulting from injury to sensitive tissue, inflammation, and unpleasant emotional experiences, and
- chronic or long-term consequences including:
  - pain which lingers after the acute phase,
  - increased sensitivity to pain (hyperalgesia),
  - prolonged, intense, spontaneous and sometimes debilitating
  - pain which feels hot (causalgia),
  - pain resulting from injury to nerves (neuroma, neuritis and
  - somatic pain),
  - continuing sensation or pain in an amputated body part (phantom pain), or
  - other untoward effects such as modified behaviour (e.g. reduced ability to deter flies due to a shortened tail).

There are also different types of pain resulting from different stimuli of cutting, searing, constricting or crushing (mediated by different pain receptors and nerves):

- mechanical – caused by the pressure of impacts, squeezing or stretching of tissues,
- thermal – caused by excessive heat or cold,
- chemical – caused by chemicals released from damaged tissues, or by caustic chemicals applied to sensitive tissues, and
- ischaemic – caused by reduced or blocked blood flow to tissues.

Different procedures also cause different short-term changes in the animals (e.g. in behaviour), the duration and intensity of which may depend on the procedure itself and on the particular technique used.

The sorts of behaviour indicative of pain vary between species, the procedure undertaken, and the technique and methods used. Typical behaviours may include some of the following:

- inactivity or immobilization,
- abnormal postures and gaits, and slow movements,
- restlessness,

- changes in the patterns of activity and/or amount of time spent undertaking different activities e.g. lying down, walking, grooming, grazing and ruminating,
- tail shaking, ear flicking, head shaking, foot stamping, kicking, rolling, showing tremors, vocalizing, and rubbing or licking the affected part,
- agonistic or aggressive behaviour towards other animals or humans,
- effort to get away from the source of the pain.

Typically, the durations of short-term or acute behavioural and physiological changes indicating significant pain and distress in animals operated on without pain relief include:

- tail docking – usually up to 1-3 hours with rings or docking iron, but up to 6-8 hours when removed surgically,
- castration – usually up to 4 hours, but up to 8 hours depending on the species and method,
- disbudding – up to 4 hours, and
- dehorning – up to 7-8 hours.

After this acute phase, there is a period of up to 4 or more weeks when healing occurs, during which the normal patterns of growth and behaviour of the animal can be affected.

Wound healing involves repair and regeneration of the damaged tissue. In the initial part of the process bleeding is controlled and a seal forms over the wound. Over subsequent days as healing progresses, new tissue grows across the wound to replace the initial seal which is removed along with any tissue around the wound which may have been damaged by crushing or bruising. Healing is completed when the new tissue strengthens into scar tissue. The rate of healing is fastest when the amount of tissue damaged is small, when the edges of the wound sit closely together, when the wound is clean (without dirt or bacterial contamination), and when bleeding is minimal. The rate of healing can also be affected by cautery, age, disease, and malnutrition.

It is therefore important to only undertake procedures likely to cause pain and distress when they are necessary. Greater justification is required for more invasive procedures, which are more likely to cause pain and distress.

Aligned with a justification for the procedure, the operator has to consider farming methods and systems which would reduce the need to routinely perform painful procedures (i.e. deal with the factors underlying the problem). In addition, techniques for minimising the discomfort, pain or distress caused to the animals, and whether or not it is necessary to always treat all animals in that way, have to be considered.

Generally, the least distressful methods will be those involving less interference to sensitive tissues, those associated with pain-related behaviour and physiological changes of shorter duration and lower magnitude, and those resulting in quicker healing.

Minimum Standard No. 1 – Justification for Painful Procedures
(a) Painful husbandry procedures must only be performed where there are no other practical, economically viable, effective, less noxious alternatives to the procedure; and they: i) result in an overall enhancement of the animals' welfare through reduced susceptibility to ill-health, injury or compromised welfare; or ii) facilitate advantageous farm management systems; or iii) result in an enhanced animal product; or iv) result in reduced safety risk to humans.

Recommended Best Practice

a) Careful consideration should be given to the need to perform routine painful husbandry procedures on any animal. The benefits to the animal, to farm management, to product harvest or attributes, or to human safety from treating the animal in that way should outweigh any discomfort, pain or distress caused to the animal.

b) Operators should seek up-to-date advice from competent sources, including veterinarians and industry advisory bodies, on the need to undertake husbandry procedures resulting in pain in animals. This should include:

   i) whether it is necessary to perform the procedure
   ii) whether the procedure causes pain
   iii) if it does cause pain, can the issue it addresses be resolved or managed in other less invasive ways
   iv) if it cannot be managed in other ways, what is the best method, the optimal age for the animal for undertaking the procedure, and
   v) can any discomfort, pain or distress associated with the procedure be minimised or relieved, including through the use of pain relief or using a veterinarian to undertake the procedure?

c) Economically viable and practicable farming systems and practices not requiring the routine use of painful husbandry procedures should be adopted in preference to those requiring routine painful husbandry procedures.

General Information

Painful husbandry procedures should be looked upon as transitional management practices. While such procedures may be seen as necessary at present, operators and farm industries are encouraged to further develop management systems and breeding programmes which do not require them to be performed routinely. Breeding programmes, management systems, and technologies (e.g. polled cattle, short-tailed sheep, slaughtering animals before puberty, and using intensive grazing systems that result in reduced aggressive behaviour) should continue to be developed and used so that painful husbandry procedures can be phased out in the future.

Part 3: Minimising the Pain and Distress

Introduction

There are a number of methods for minimising the pain and distress and other untoward affects associated with husbandry procedures that result in injury to the sensitive tissues of animals. These may include one or more of the following:

- ensuring that related activities before and after the procedure (e.g. mustering, handling and restraint) are as benign as practicable (in some cases familiarising the animals with them may be possible),
- minimising the duration of the handling procedure,
- carrying out the procedure at an age and/or physiological state when harmful responses (discomfort, pain or distress) and/or when risk of post-operative complications are least,
- avoiding critical periods, such as during the uptake of colostrum and bonding of dam and newborn, where distress may be detrimental to the well-being and survival of the young animal,
- using the least noxious method practicable as some methods can cause less distress than others,
- using a local anaesthetic or analgesic to block or relieve pain,
- using hygienic methods and those which minimise blood loss
- undertaking additional or multiple procedures at the same time, and
- providing post-operative care.

Generally the younger the animal is treated, the less pain and distress it will experience, partly because it can be more easily handled and the procedure completed more quickly and efficiently, and partly because less sensitive tissue is interfered with resulting in a smaller wound and therefore better healing.

While there are a number of methods of minimising the harmful consequences of painful husbandry procedures, many will depend upon the animals, the environment, and the circumstances in which the procedures are undertaken. In deciding whether or not to implement the Recommended Best Practices in this Code, it is therefore critical that owners and stock handlers take account of factors such as:

- weather conditions
- class and breed of stock
- habituation of animals to handling
- animal health and condition, as well as age and physiological status
- any risk of permanent separation of dam and offspring
- the balance between monitoring for post-operative care and any associated disturbance and distress.

In many situations, experience and good stockmanship will determine which actions are appropriate.

Minimum Standard No. 2 – Minimising Harmful Consequences
(a) Painful husbandry procedures must not be performed on newborn animals less than 12 hours old, where handling, pain and postoperative complications are likely to compromise survival through impairing maternal bonding and/or colostrum intake. (b) If painful husbandry procedures that have animal health and welfare benefits are not used, care must be taken to manage any consequential risks to animal health and welfare of not using them.

Recommended Best Practice

a) Consideration should be given to means of minimising any discomfort, pain or distress caused to the animal as a result of the husbandry procedure.
b) If painful husbandry procedures are used, the methods and techniques likely to cause the least discomfort, pain or distress within particular practical and economic constraints should be used.
c) Pain relief should be used if it is economically and practically viable to do so.
d) Animals should be checked for signs of post-operative complications, including significant pain and distress, and appropriate remedial action taken as required.

General Information

Generally, conventional rubber rings result in less acute pain than high tension bands, which in turn result in less acute pain than surgical techniques. Similarly, less invasive techniques (e.g. surgical castration with cutting spermatic cords) result in less acute pain than more invasive techniques (e.g. surgical castration with tearing spermatic cords). Techniques using both local anaesthetic and sedation tend to result in less acute pain than those performed with either agent alone. Finally, techniques done with pain relief result in less acute pain than techniques performed without any form of pain relief.

Precautions should be taken to minimise any detrimental effects of pain, distress or other factors on animal health and welfare during the period of wound healing.

Many surgical modifications to animals do not always completely eliminate the risk of health and welfare compromise to the animals. Systems should be in place to prevent, or detect and manage affected animals.

Operators should seek up-to-date advice from appropriate sources on techniques for minimising the pain associated with different husbandry procedures.

Future developments in minimising pain and distress

The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) supports and encourages continued efforts towards minimising the pain and distress associated with the husbandry procedures described in this code. This includes the wider use of pain relief when undertaking painful husbandry procedures. However, there are a number of issues, many beyond NAWAC's statutory functions, which need to be taken into consideration. These include:

- the wider availability, safety and efficacy of pain relieving drugs
- practical and economic aspects determining the use of pain relieving drugs
- attitudes and expectations towards minimising pain associated with painful husbandry
- procedures, and the equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of doing so
- the regulatory environment required to support the use of restricted drugs.

NAWAC is of the opinion that until these issues are explored and resolved in accordance with good practice, scientific knowledge and available technology, it would be imprudent to implement widespread changes. The Committee will instead interact with the farming, veterinary and related pharmaceutical industries, as well as the regulatory agencies, in order to develop strategies for improving animal welfare within the practical, economic, safety and social constraints it has identified.

Part 4: Castration and Shortening of the Scrotum (Cryptorchid)

Introduction

Some farm animals are castrated, or their testes altered, to reduce aggression and facilitate management, or to restrict breeding, and also to achieve desirable meat and carcass quality attributes.

There are several techniques. The most common involves the application of a rubber ring to either cause atrophy of the testes and scrotum, or to hold the testes against the abdomen where the increase in testicular temperature makes most animals infertile (known as shortening the scrotum or cryptorchid). Two other methods involve the surgical opening of the scrotum followed by removal of the testes, or crushing of the spermatic cords through the skin of the scrotum with a bloodless castrator or clamp.

A relatively recent technique is the application of a very tight or high tension specialised latex band. Placed in a loop around the scrotum immediately above the testes, it is mechanically tightened to a very high tension.

The testes and scrotum are richly supplied with nerves and any modification to them is likely to cause immediate pain that may last for several hours. Castration, or shortening of the scrotum, should only be considered when there are significant advantages for farm management and/or carcass quality.

See summary of regulations appended to this Code:

- Regulation 53 – Castrating cattle beasts and sheep
- Regulation 54 – Castrating horses
- Regulation 55 – Castrating pigs

Minimum Standard No. 3 – Castration and Shortening of the Scrotum (cryptorchid)

(a) The method of castration, or shortening of the scrotum, must be chosen, and applied, so as to minimise the acute as well as chronic consequences for the health and welfare of the animal.

(b) While complying with Minimum Standard 2(a), castration, or shortening of the scrotum, without pain relief must be performed when the animals are as young as possible, but not greater than six months of age.

(c) When castrating or shortening the scrotum of any animal over the age of six months, pain relief must be used.

(ca) Horses and pigs, regardless of age:

i) must not be castrated without pain relief, and

ii) may be castrated only by a veterinarian, or by a veterinary student under the direct supervision of a veterinarian throughout the procedure.

(cb) A cattle beast or a sheep that is over six months of age must not be castrated unless throughout the procedure the animal is under the influence of an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian.

(d) When using rubber rings to castrate, they must be placed above the testes and below the teats, and must be of a tension and size appropriate to the animal in order to ensure that blood supply to the testes and scrotum is stopped immediately.

(e) When shortening the scrotum with rubber rings, they must be placed below the testes taking care not to include the testes within the ring, and they must be of a tension and size appropriate to the animal in order to ensure that blood supply to the scrotum is stopped immediately.

(f) If high tension bands are used to castrate an animal:

i) an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian for the purpose of the procedure must be used to provide pain relief (regardless of the age of the animal), and

ii) the band must be positioned on the scrotal neck as close to the testes and as far from the abdomen as possible.

Recommended Best Practice

a) Pain relief should be provided when animals are castrated, or have their scrotums shortened, at any age.
b) Operators should seek up-to-date advice from competent sources, including veterinarians and industry advisory bodies, on the best method of modifying testicular function, and use it, so as to minimise the acute and any chronic consequences for the health and welfare of the animal.
c) Conventional rubber rings should be used on younger animals in preference to the use of high tension bands at any age, since the former procedure is less noxious.
d) The area where castration, or shortening of the scrotum, is carried out, the equipment used, the animals themselves and the operator's hands should be as clean as possible and, where practicable, animals should be dry.
e) Precautions, such as vaccination, should be taken to minimise the risk of clostridial infections.

General Information

The preferred method of castration is to apply a rubber ring to the neck of the scrotum using an elastrator when the animals are a few weeks old.

If conventional rubber rings are used for castration or shortening of the scrotum, the best results are achieved up to four weeks of age.

Conventional rubber rings should not be used in well-grown animals (e.g. calves more than four months of age) as after this the ring is not able to effectively constrict blood flow leading to swelling and associated pain.

There is scientific evidence which shows that the application of high tension latex bands to calves of three to four months of age causes significant pain, while lesions associated with poor healing may be seen in some older animals. As conventional rubber rings are a less noxious alternative, the use of high tension bands is not recommended for young animals.

Surgical castration is not recommended in lambs since it causes greater and more prolonged acute pain and distress compared with other methods. There is also an increased risk of excessive bleeding, infection, and hernias (prolapse of the intestine into the scrotum).

Where acute pain is the major concern, scientific research shows that the least painful to the most painful castration procedures are:

Lambs

- rubber ring with local anaesthetic
- shortening of the scrotum
- rubber ring, without pain relief
- surgery without pain relief.

Calves

- rubber ring or high tension bands with local anaesthetic, or surgery with local anaesthetic plus analgesic
- rubber ring without pain relief or surgery without pain relief

Part 5: Tail Docking

Introduction

Docking of tails is carried out for a variety of animal health and management reasons. Sheep are the most commonly docked animals where the procedure is undertaken to help prevent faecal soiling and dag formation and risk of flystrike, and to make dagging, crutching and shearing easier and safer to perform.

Tails have a number of functions in different animals. The behavioural functions include deterring insects from the rear region of the animal. The structural functions include the base of the tail being an anchor for some muscles regulating the proper function of the rectum. Tails are richly supplied with nerves and blood vessels so that their removal is significant for the animal. It is therefore important that the reasons for, and necessity to, perform the operation are carefully considered (see Part 2: General Principles).

The common techniques of tail removal include the use of a conventional rubber ring or a hot-iron or searing iron.

See summary of regulations appended to this Code:

- Regulation 50 – Docking cattle beasts' tails
- Regulation 52 – Docking pigs' tails

Minimum Standard No. 4 – Tail Docking

Sheep

(a) Tail docking of sheep must only be undertaken where there is significant risk of faecal and urine contamination, and/or flystrike, that leads to poor hygiene, health and welfare and/or failing to do so adds a significant cost to the farm system.
(b) While complying with Minimum Standard 2(a), tail docking without pain relief must be performed when the sheep are as young as possible, and not greater than six months of age.
(c) When tail docking a sheep over the age of six months, pain relief must be used.

Cattle

(d) A person must not dock the tail of a cattle beast unless:
  i) the person is required to urgently dock the tail in response to an accidental tail injury in order to prevent excessive bleeding or further injury to the cattle beast, or
  ii) the person is a veterinarian (or a veterinary student under the direct supervision of a veterinarian throughout the procedure) and docks the tail for therapeutic purposes, using pain relief at the time of the procedure.

Recommended Best Practice

a) Operators should seek up-to-date advice from competent sources, including veterinarians and industry advisory bodies, on the best method of tail docking or shortening, and use it, so as to minimise the acute and any chronic consequences for the health and welfare of the animal.
b) When sheep are tail docked, their tails (excluding any wool) should be left long enough to cover the vulva in females and at a similar length in males. Tail docking of sheep should be undertaken before six weeks of age.
c) Should practical and economic methods of providing pain relief for tail docking become available, they should be used.
d) Precautions, such as vaccination, should be taken to minimise the risk of clostridial infections.

General Information

Surgical techniques of tail removal are associated with greater risks of bleeding and infection.

Conventional rubber rings, or hot- or searing-irons, both cause similar amounts of acute pain and distress, and considerably less than surgical techniques of tail removal. The exceptionally high pressure generated by high tension bands means they are likely to cause unnecessary pain if used to tail dock animals. Other, less painful methods are preferable.

Hot- or searing-irons need to be maintained at the correct temperature to avoid repeated applications (too cold) or unnecessary tissue damage (too hot).

Part 6: Disbudding and Dehorning

Introduction

Horns, when used as weapons, can pose a significant risk to the health and welfare of other animals and humans. They also contribute to carcass downgrading through bruising and hide damage.

While the use of hornless or polled breeds is to be preferred, there are many horned breeds.

Horns grow from free-floating tissue or horn buds which appear in the skin above the skull at or soon after birth. As the animal grows older, the horn bud attaches to the skull and the horn starts growing as a bony extension of the skull. Horns are removed either at the horn bud stage (disbudding) or by amputation in the older animal (dehorning). Dehorning also exposes the frontal sinuses as they become continuous with the growing horn.

Disbudding techniques include thermal cautery (the use of heat to destroy the tissues nourishing the horn bud), caustic chemicals (also to destroy the horn bud) and surgical procedures (removing the horn buds with a sharp knife or scoop disbudder).

Dehorning involves amputating the whole horn with guillotine shears, a butcher's saw, embryotomy wire or scoop dehorners (interlocking semicircular blades).

Tipping, the removal of the insensitive end of the horn, is sometimes used to reduce the risk of injury to other animals.

Up until 30 September 2019, Minimum Standard 5 reads:

Minimum Standard No. 5 – Disbudding and Dehorning

(a) Animals with intact or "tipped" horns must be managed to minimise the risk of injury to other animals.

Disbudding

(b) When disbudding is performed, the following must apply:
  i) the method must be chosen and undertaken so as to minimise the pain and distress and other negative health consequences (e.g. infection) for the animal, and
  ii) if used, thermal cauterising equipment must be used in such a way as to minimise the risk of thermal injury to tissues other than the horn bud and adjacent skin, and
  iii) if used, caustic or chemical techniques of disbudding must only be used by personnel skilled with the procedure, and only used when injury to the animal beyond the horn bud, or to other animals, is minimised.

Dehorning

(c) When dehorning is performed, the following must apply
  i) the method must be chosen and undertaken so as to minimise the pain and distress and other negative health consequences (e.g. infection) for the animal, and
  ii) dehorning without pain relief must be performed when animals are as young as possible, and not greater than nine months of age, and
  iii) when dehorning any animal over the age of nine months, pain relief must be used.

From 1 October 2019, see summary of regulations appended to this Code:

- *Regulation 57: Disbudding cattle beasts*
- *Regulation 58: Dehorning cattle beasts*

From 1 October 2019, Minimum Standard 5 reads:

Minimum Standard No. 5 – Disbudding and Dehorning

(a) Animals with intact or "tipped" horns must be managed to minimise the risk of injury to other animals.

Disbudding

(b) When disbudding is performed, the following must apply:
  i) the method must be chosen and undertaken so as to minimise the pain and distress and other negative health consequences (e.g. infection) for the animal, and
  ii) if used, thermal cauterising equipment must be used in such a way as to minimise the risk of thermal injury to tissues other than the horn bud and adjacent skin, and
  iii) if used, caustic or chemical techniques of disbudding must only be used by personnel skilled with the procedure, and only used when injury to the animal beyond the horn bud, or to other animals, is minimised.
  iv) a cattle beast must not be disbudded unless throughout the procedure the cattle beast is under the influence of an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian for the purpose of the procedure.

Dehorning

(c) When dehorning is performed, the following must apply:
  i) the method must be chosen and undertaken so as to minimise the pain and distress and other negative health consequences (e.g. infection) for the animal, and
  ii) dehorning without pain relief must be performed when animals are as young as possible, and not greater than nine months of age, and
  iii) when dehorning any animal over the age of nine months, pain relief must be used.
  iv) a cattle beast must not be dehorned unless throughout the procedure the cattle beast is under the influence of an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian for the purpose of the procedure.

Recommended Best Practice

a) Animals should be disbudded in preference to being dehorned.
b) To facilitate the humane and effective management of the animals, and to minimise tissue damage and pain, horns should be prevented from developing, or be removed, at the youngest age compatible with minimising associated negative health and welfare consequences for the animal.
c) When dehorning, effective means of preventing excessive blood loss should be used. Likewise, a wound dressing or medication should be applied and if flies are likely to be a problem the animals should be treated with insecticide.
d) All animals should be inspected regularly during the healing period, especially for the first two weeks after disbudding, and any infected wounds treated.
e) Where dehorning has exposed the frontal sinuses of the skull, animals should be inspected regularly during the healing period, and any infected wounds treated.
f) Precautions, such as vaccination, should be taken to minimise the risk of clostridial infections.

General Information

While horn buds are generally evident at or soon after birth, there is some variation in the age at which horns develop, and the age at which the frontal sinuses become continuous with the hollow inner portion of the horn. Usually, the sinuses invade the horn when it reaches a certain size (often when the calf is about six months of age).

The skull of goat kids is much thinner than that of calves. Thermal cautery disbudding techniques must be carefully used to avoid damage to underlying tissues, including the brain. If the initial burn is not adequate, or does not cover the diameter of the horn bud, then the site should be allowed to cool before heat is reapplied. As well as being shallow, the horn bud of kids is more diffuse and a wider piece of adjacent skin (5mm around each horn bud) should also be taken to avoid regrowth of horn material (scurs).

Caustic chemical disbudding requires careful management to ensure the chemical does not come into contact with other tissues, either on the animal itself, or other animals, including humans. This risk is exacerbated when the animals are hungry and suck or rub their dams or herd mates, and by rain. The use of petroleum jelly around the horn bud can lessen injury to surrounding tissue. The technique is best performed when the horn bud is just palpable or just erupting, usually when the animals are 7- 10 days old.

Part 7: Operator Training, Stockmanship and Facilities

Introduction

The care of animals before, during and after painful husbandry procedures are applied, requires competence, experience and the observance of high standards.

Under the Act the "owner" of an animal and the "person in charge" is responsible for meeting the legal obligations for animal welfare.

This Code establishes minimum standards of care for all animals upon which painful husbandry procedures are to be undertaken, and is intended to encourage all owners and persons in charge to adopt higher standards of husbandry, care and handling, based on the recommended best practices. While this Code is based on current knowledge and technology available at the time of issue, there is also a need for experience and common sense in the handling of animals.

The importance of good stockmanship cannot be over-emphasised. Those responsible for the care of animals should be competent and well trained. Personnel should be appropriately instructed in the care and maintenance of equipment, in the techniques used, and in the care of animals and how their actions may affect animal health and welfare. Knowledge of the normal appearance and behaviour of animals is essential.

Minimum Standard No. 6 – Operator Training, Stockmanship and Facilities

(a) Owners or persons in charge of animals upon which painful husbandry procedures are to be undertaken, must ensure that they or their personnel have either the relevant knowledge and training or appropriate supervision, and suitable equipment, to ensure that the health and welfare needs of the animals in their care are met.
(b) Persons undertaking painful husbandry procedures must be:
  i) experienced, or have received training, with the correct use of the particular technique and its variations, and
  ii) be able to recognise early signs of significant distress, injury or ill health so that prompt remedial action can be taken or advice sought.
(c) All equipment must be maintained in full working order.
(d) Appropriate standards of cleanliness and hygiene must be observed at all times.
(e) Where used, handling facilities must allow the procedure to be undertaken with minimal compromise to the health and welfare of the animals
(f) Handling facilities must be sited, constructed, maintained and operated so as to minimise the risk of injury and avoid unnecessary distress to the animals.

Recommended Best Practice

a) Personnel should undergo training either formally or on the job by supervisors experienced in the correct application and use of the techniques.
b) Where there is an on-farm quality assurance programme in place, handling techniques should be included in these as written procedures, and the programme should emphasise the importance of training of personnel.
c) Owners and persons in charge of animals upon which painful husbandry procedures are undertaken should keep up to date with developments in techniques and alternative procedures designed to minimise the pain and distress associated with the procedure.
d) All equipment should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

General Information

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority lists a number of training qualifications for stockhandlers.

Information on these qualifications and accredited training providers is available from the Agriculture Industry Training Organisation, PO Box 10 383, Wellington, or from the NZQA web site: www.nzqa.govt.nz

Schedule I – Interpretation and Definitions

Act

The Animal Welfare Act 1999.

anaesthesia

Artificially induced insensitivity to pain, usually achieved through the administration of gases or drugs.

analgesia

The absence of, or relief of, pain, usually through the administration of drugs

animal

As defined in the Act:

a) Means any live member of the animal kingdom that is –

   i) A mammal; or
   ii) A bird; or
   iii) A reptile; or
   iv) An amphibian; or
   v) A fish (bony or cartilaginous); or
   vi) Any octopus, squid, crab, lobster, or crayfish (including freshwater crayfish); or
   vii) Any other member of the animal kingdom which is declared from time to time by the Governor-General, by Order in Council, to be an animal for the purposes of the Act; and

b) Includes any mammalian foetus, or any avian or reptilian pre-hatched young, that is in the last half of its period of gestation or development; and
c) Includes any marsupial pouch young; but
d) Does not include –

   i) A human being; or
   ii) Except as provided in paragraph (b) or paragraph (c), any animal in the pre-natal, pre-hatched, larval, or other such developmental stage."

available technology

The Act does not define "available technology". NAWAC takes "available technology" to represent, for example, existing chemicals, drugs, instruments, devices and facilities which are used practically to care for and manage animals.

brand

To mark indelibly the skin of an animal by burning, usually with hot or very cold irons, for the purpose of identification of ownership, age or other purpose.

castration

Removal of the testes, severance or crushing of the blood supply to the testes, severance or crushing of the spermatic cords, or forcing the testes against the abdominal wall.

cautery

Applying extreme temperature or a caustic agent to stop bleeding and prevent infection or destroy growing tissue.

crutching

Removal of wool from the hindquarters of a sheep.

cryptorchid

An animal in which one or both testes have not normally descended from the abdominal cavity to the scrotum, and the colloquial term for short-scrotum males (see below).

dag

A clot of matted wool and excrement found on (or removed from) the hindquarters of a sheep.

dagging

Removal of dags or daggy wool from a sheep's hindquarters.

dehorning

until 30 September 2019, this means the removal of whole horns (including any regrowth after disbudding) from an animal by amputation.

From 1 October 2019, the following definition for dehorn applies:

dehorn

To remove the horn or part of the horn (including any regrowth after disbudding) from an animal by amputation. It does not include removal of the hard insensitive tip of the horn resulting in a blunt hard end or the removal of an ingrown horn (as described in regulation 38(4) of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018) within 3 cm of the point where the horn touches or breaks the surface of the skin or touches the eyelid or surface of the eye.

disbudding

until 30 September 2019, this means the destruction of free-floating immature horn tissue (horn "buds" growing from the skin) from which the horns of an animal subsequently develop.

From 1 October 2019, the following definition for disbud applies:

disbud

To destroy, by any method, free-floating immature horn tissue.

dock

To shorten or remove the tail of an animal by any method (see tailing or tail docking).

elastrator

A device which stretches rubber rings allowing them to be applied to the tail or scrotum to dock or castrate the animal.

emasculator or castration clamp

An instrument for castrating an animal by crushing or cutting the spermatic cords. The operation may involve either opening of the scrotum to crush and/or cut the cords, or crushing of the cords by applying the device externally.

farm or farmed animals

Any animals bred and/or reared for food, fibre, and/or offspring

good practice

The Act does not define “good practice”. NAWAC takes “good practice” to mean a standard of care that has a general level of acceptance among knowledgeable practitioners and experts in the field; is based on good sense and sound judgement; is practical and thorough; has robust experiential or scientific foundations; and prevents unreasonable or unnecessary harm to, or promotes the interests of, the animals to which it is applied. Good practice also takes account of the evolution of attitudes about animals and their care.

high tension band

A band that is mechanically tightened during application, with tension maintained by a crimp or similar device when the band is released from the applicator.

inflammation

Localised physical condition with heat, swelling, redness and usually pain, especially as a reaction to injury or infection.

insecticide

Means a registered animal remedy to deter or destroy insects and external parasites.

local

A drug given to block nerves supplying a specific area in order to prevent or relieve pain in that area.

minimum standards

Minimum standards are identified in the text by a heading and use the word “must” or similar words. They are highlighted in boxes within the text.

mulesing

The surgical removal of the breech and/or tail skin folds or wrinkles of merino or merino-dominant sheep to reduce the risk of flystrike.

noxious

Harmful or unpleasant, causing discomfort, pain or distress.

painful husbandry procedures

Means any procedure carried out with or without instruments which involves physical interference with the sensitive soft tissue or bone structure of an animal and is carried out for non-therapeutic reasons. It does not apply to those procedures used to treat animals with existing injuries or diseases.

pain relief

Any analgesic or local anaesthetic drugs (or both) administered with the aim of providing significant alleviation of pain.

prophylactic treatment

Any treatment given to prevent or to protect against disease or injury.

recommended best practice

NAWAC takes to mean the best practice agreed at a particular time, following consideration of scientific information, accumulated experience and public submissions on this Code. It is usually a higher standard of practice than the minimum standard, except where the minimum standard is best practice. It is a practice that can be varied as new information comes to light. Recommendations for best practice will be particularly appropriate where it is desirable to promote or encourage better care for animals than is provided as a minimum standard.

Recommended best practices are identified in the text by a heading, and generally use the word "should".

rings

Means conventional rubber rings for constricting blood supply to the scrotum and testes, or the tail of animal.

sedative

A drug which is calming, soothing or sleep inducing.

scientific knowledge

NAWAC takes to mean knowledge within animal-based scientific disciplines, especially those that deal with nutritional, environmental, health, behavioural and cognitive/neural functions, which are relevant to understanding the physical, health and behavioural needs of animals. Such knowledge is not haphazard or anecdotal; it is generated by rigorous and systematic application of the scientific method, and the results are objectively and critically reviewed before acceptance.

short-scrotum or cryptorchid males

Males rendered infertile by the method of castration that involves forcing the testes against the abdominal wall by removing the scrotum through the application of a rubber ring to the scrotum below (distal to) the testes.

surgical technique

Any procedure which uses a knife or similar device to perform a particular procedure, with or without anaesthesia, analgesia, or aseptic techniques.

tailing or tail docking

To shorten or remove the tail of an animal by any method (see dock).

therapeutic purpose

For the purpose of responding to an existing disease or inury.

tipping

The removal of the hard, insensitive tip of the horn.

Appendix of extracts from the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018

Although efforts to include relevant regulations within this code have been made, there may be other regulations which are relevant to you. The full list of all animal welfare regulations should be consulted where appropriate (see www.legislation.govt.nz).

2 Commencement

(1) The following regulations come into force on the 28th day after the date of the notification of these regulations in the *Gazette:*

a) regulation 3 (interpretation):
b) regulation 4 (transitional, savings, and related provisions):
c) regulations 8, 9, 10, 33 to 37, 44, 63(1), and 64(1) and (2)(a) (which relate to young calves):
d) regulation 60 (offences are strict liability offences):
e) regulation 61 (defences for non-infringement offences).

(2) The rest of these regulations, except regulations 57, 58, and 63(3) (which relate to disbudding and dehorning cattle beasts) come into force on 1 October 2018.

(3) Regulations 57, 58, and 63(3) come into force on 1 October 2019.

3 Interpretation

In these regulations, unless the context otherwise requires,—

castrate means to remove the testes, sever or crush blood supply to the testes, sever or crush the spermatic cords, or force the testes against the abdominal wall
dock means to shorten or remove the tail of an animal by any method
horse,—
(a) except in regulation 54, means any equid, including any horse, pony, or donkey, and any of their hybrids; but
(b) in any case does not include a zebra

pain relief means any analgesic or local anaesthetic drugs (or both) administered with the aim of providing significant alleviation of pain
therapeutic purpose means for the purpose of responding to an existing disease or injury

50 Docking cattle beasts' tails

(1) A person must not dock the tail of a cattle beast.

(2) A person who fails to comply with this regulation commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $3,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $15,000.

(3) A person has a defence to a prosecution for an offence against this regulation if the person was required to urgently dock the tail of the cattle beast in response to an accidental tail injury in order to prevent excessive bleeding or further injury to the cattle beast.

(4) A person has a defence to a prosecution for an offence against this regulation if—

a) the person was a veterinarian, or a veterinary student under the direct supervision of a veterinarian throughout the procedure; and
b) the person docked the tail of the cattle beast for therapeutic purposes; and
c) the cattle beast was given pain relief at the time of the procedure.

52 Docking pigs' tails

(1) A person who docks the tail of a pig that is under 7 days of age must ensure that the procedure creates a clean cut and does not tear the tissue.

(2) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a pig that is under 7 days of age must not allow the pig's tail to be docked in breach of subclause (1).

(3) A person must not dock the tail of a pig that is 7 days of age or over unless—

a) the person is a veterinarian, or a veterinary student under the directsupervision of a veterinarian throughout the procedure; and
b) the pig is given pain relief at the time of the procedure.

(4) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a pig that is 7 days of age or over must not allow the pig's tail to be docked in breach of subclause (3).

(5) A person who docks the tail of a pig must—

a) be experienced with, or have received training in, the correct use of the method being used; and
b) be able to recognise early signs of significant distress, injury, or illhealth so that the person can take prompt remedial action or seek advice.

(6) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a pig that is to have its tail docked must ensure that the health and welfare needs of the pig are met during the procedure and recovery, by ensuring that at all times a person is available who—

a) has suitable equipment; and
b) has the relevant knowledge, has received relevant training, or is under appropriate supervision.

(7) A person who fails to comply with subclause (1) or (2) commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding $1,500.

(8) The offence in subclause (7) is an infringement offence with an infringement fee of $500.

(9) A person who fails to comply with subclause (3) or (4) commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $3,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $15,000.

53 Castrating cattle beasts and sheep

(1) A person must not castrate a cattle beast or a sheep that is over 6 months of age unless throughout the procedure the animal is under the influence of an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian for the purpose of the procedure.

(2) A person must not castrate a cattle beast or a sheep (of any age) using a high tension band unless throughout the procedure the animal is under the influence of an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian for the purpose of the procedure.

(3) A person who castrates a cattle beast or a sheep must—

a) be experienced with, or have received training in, the correct use of the method being used; and
b) be able to recognise early signs of significant distress, injury, or illhealth so that the person can take prompt remedial action or seek advice.

(4) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a cattle beast or a sheep that is to be castrated must ensure that the health and welfare needs of the animal are met during the procedure and recovery, by ensuring that at all times a person is available who—

a) has suitable equipment; and
b) has the relevant knowledge, has received relevant training, or is under appropriate supervision.

(5) A person who fails to comply with subclause (1) or (2) commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $3,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $15,000.

(6) In this regulation, **high tension band** means a band that is mechanically tightened during application, with tension maintained by a crimp or similar device when the band is released from the applicator.

54 Castrating horses

(1) A person must not castrate a horse unless—

a) the person is a veterinarian, or a veterinary student under the direct supervision of a veterinarian throughout the procedure; and
b) the horse is given pain relief at the time of the procedure.

(2) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a horse must not allow the horse to be castrated in breach of subclause (1).

(3) A person who fails to comply with this regulation commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $5,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $25,000.

(4) In this regulation, **horse** means any equid that is a horse or pony, but does not include any other equid referred to in the definition of horse in regulation 3.

55 Castrating pigs

(1) A person must not castrate a pig unless—

a) the person is a veterinarian, or a veterinary student under the direct supervision of a veterinarian throughout the procedure; and
b) the pig is given pain relief at the time of the procedure.

(2) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a pig must not allow the pig to be castrated in breach of subclause (1).

(3) A person who fails to comply with this regulation commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $5,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $25,000.

57 Disbudding cattle beasts

(1) A person must not disbud a cattle beast unless throughout the procedure the cattle beast is under the influence of an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian for the purpose of the procedure.

(2) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a cattle beast must not allow the beast to be disbudded in breach of subclause (1).

(3) A person who disbuds a cattle beast must—

a) be experienced with, or have received training in, the correct use of the method being used; and
b) be able to recognise early signs of significant distress, injury, or illhealth so that the person can take prompt remedial action or seek advice.

(4) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a cattle beast that is to be disbudded must ensure that the health and welfare needs of the animal are met during the procedure and recovery, by ensuring that at all times a person is available who—

a) has suitable equipment; and
b) has the relevant knowledge, has received relevant training, or is under appropriate supervision.

(5) A person who fails to comply with subclause (1) or (2) commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $3,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $15,000.

(6) In this regulation, **disbud** means to destroy, by any method, free-floating immature horn tissue.

58 Dehorning cattle beasts

(1) A person must not dehorn a cattle beast unless throughout the procedure the cattle beast is under the influence of an appropriately placed and effective local anaesthetic that is authorised by a veterinarian for the purpose of the procedure.

(2) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a cattle beast must not allow the beast to be dehorned in breach of subclause (1).

(3) A person who dehorns a cattle beast must—

a) be experienced with, or have received training in, the correct use of the method being used; and
b) be able to recognise early signs of significant distress, injury, or illhealth so that the person can take prompt remedial action or seek advice.

(4) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a cattle beast that is to be dehorned must ensure that the health and welfare needs of the animal are met during the procedure and recovery, by ensuring that at all times a person is available who—

a) has suitable equipment; and
b) has the relevant knowledge, has received relevant training, or is under appropriate supervision.

(5) A person who fails to comply with subclause (1) or (2) commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $5,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $25,000.

(6) In this regulation, **dehorn**—

a) means to remove the horn or part of the horn (including any regrowth after disbudding) from a cattle beast by amputation; but
b) does not include—

i) removal of the hard insensitive tip of the horn resulting in a blunt hard end; or
ii) removal of an ingrown horn (as described in regulation 38(4)) within 3 cm of the point where the horn touches or breaks the surface of the skin or touches the eyelid or surface of the eye.

59 Prohibition on mulesing sheep

(1) A person must not, by any method, remove the breech, tail skin folds, or tail skin wrinkles of a sheep.

(2) A person who fails to comply with subclause (1) commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—

a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding $5,000; or
b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding $25,000.